

racy sermons in Germany. The emergence of the idea that "business is business/" and that the world of commercial transactions is a closed compartment with laws of its own, if more ancient than is often supposed, did not win so painless a triumph as is sometimes suggested. Puritan as well as Catholic accepted without demur the view which set all human in-terests and activities within the compass of religion. Puritans, as well as Catholics, essayed the formidable task of formulating a Christian casuistry of economic conduct.

They essayed it. But they succeeded even less than the Popes and Doctors whose teaching, not always unwittingly, they repeated. And their failure had its roots, not merely in the obstacles offered by the ever more recalcitrant opposition of a commercial environment, but, like all failures which are significant, in the soul of Puritanism itself. Virtues are often conquered by vices, but their rout is most complete when it is inflicted by other virtues, more militant, more efficient, or more congenial, and it is not only tares which choke the ground where the good seed is sown. The fundamental question, after all, is not what kind of rules a faith enjoins, but what type of character it esteems and cultivates. To the scheme of Christian ethics which offered admonitions against the numberless

disguises assumed by the sin which sticketh
fast between
buying and selling, the Puritan character
offered, not
direct opposition, but a polished surface on
which these
ghostly admonitions could find no enduring
foot-hold.
The rules of Christian morality elaborated
by Baxter
were subtle and sincere. But they
were like seeds
carried by birds from a distant and fertile
plain, and
dropped upon a glacier. They were at once
embalmed
and sterilized in a river of ice.

¹¹ The capitalist spirit " is as old as
history, and
was not, as has sometimes been said, the
offspring of
Puritanism. But it found in certain
aspects of later